

Catalogue

Mertz+

Albert Mertz

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition *Mertz+*, presented at Stalke Galleri in 2005. The publication brings together works and texts that illuminate Albert Mertz's artistic practice, with a focus on the relationship between image, reality, and representation.

The catalogue includes a text by Peter Holst Henckel, situating Mertz's work within an art-historical and theoretical context. The text highlights Mertz's investigation of the image as an object and his sustained reflection on how art functions as an optic through which we see and understand the world.

Mertz+ documents Mertz's significance for Danish and international art and his role in the development of conceptual and experimental pictorial strategies.



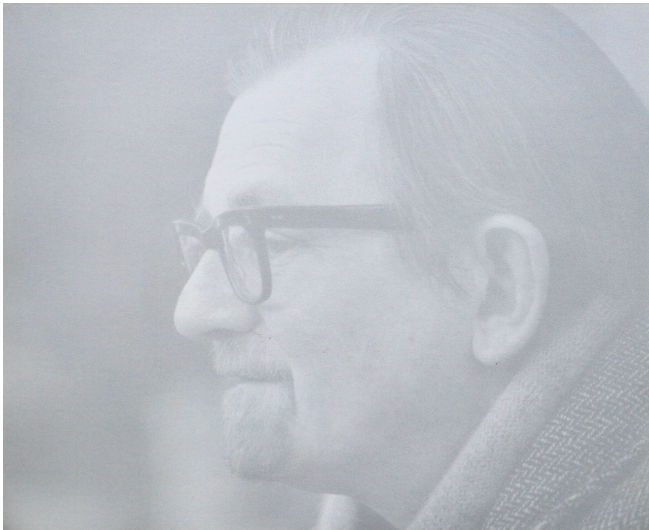
Mertz+
Stalke Galleri, 2005

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Selected pages from the catalogue *Mertz+* (2005), published in connection with the exhibition at Stalke Galleri. The pages present the visual structure of the publication and include excerpts from the text by Peter Holst Henckel.



but at a closer look they display a certain resistance. They toy with the relation between picture space, concrete image surface and reality. In this often peculiar game of looking, they point at some important painterly and image-related questions: is painting just one among so many other objects in the world, or is it rather a reflection or representation of it? What is most real: painting itself (as an object) or what the painting represents? In other words, the works appear as simple visual ways to raise some highly complex representational issues. Thereby, they unfold a basic element in Mertz' artistic practice which deals with the relation between art and reality, an element that he returns to repeatedly in his works and which he equally repeatedly reflects on in his writings.

For Mertz, it didn't make any sense to make art equal reality. To him, art was not reality but simply a way of being in the world, a way of seeing and understanding it that might make it bigger, more nuanced and thereby more interesting, but which at the same time was fundamentally something other. The work is thus an optic, an interface between the world and us, and thereby it also opens up the possibility of meeting it anew. Here and now, over and over again.

PETER HOLST HENCKEL



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”I no longer have any faith in the art object not to mention the artwork, but only in the permanent process, a stream of ideas, thoughts, actions, something never ending, something without a place, because it, due to its eternal movement, cannot attach itself, cannot stay in one place, but is in constant mutation.”
(AM 27.12.73)

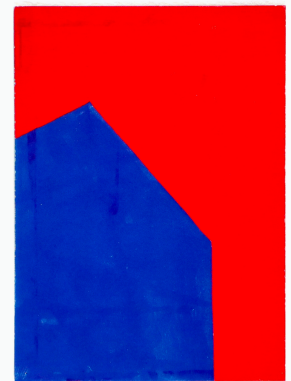


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R+B

In the autumn of 1968 Mertz "invented" the Red+Blue Proposition. A rectangle divided in the middle so that two squares were formed: a red one to the left and a blue one to the right. Over the following years he concretely and theoretically investigated and developed this seemingly simple structure in an infinite series of manifestations, variations and reflections. Up until his death he stubbornly continued to turn and twist the problems of R+B. But it is obvious that he had an ambivalent relation to it. As carried away with and as enthusiastically as he could describe the possibilities of this idea, as useless and limiting it could appear to him at other times. On November 22nd 1973 he noted, for example: "This morning I have destroyed most of my "R+B" production, but I couldn't eradicate it completely – maybe later, but not now." Fortunately, it didn't come to that!

R+B is, by all means in a Danish context, a unique and major artistic programme. Today, it stands rightly as one of the few examples of Danish art from the 60s and 70s that has an international level. So international that it almost seems utterly un-Danish. Mertz developed it intentionally to dash with an introspective and rigid Danish art scene while in his - for that very purpose created - working exile in Paris. In the beginning of the 60s he "fled" to France because he found Danish art too provincial. In southern France and later Paris there was more breathing space, and here Mertz had the opportunity to see and read about the most advanced international art. And it was in no way an uninteresting period.



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Biography

- Albert Mertz (1920-90)

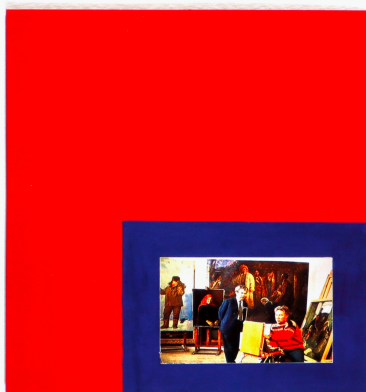
From his earliest youth he was at the forefront of experimental and internationally orientated art. Made his debut at the age of 13. Worked as a painter and film director before settling in France from 1963-1976. Was one of the founders of *Linien II* and later on part of the artist group *Den Frie*, where he drew attention with a number of early spatial works. From 1980-90 Professor at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, where he initiated fruitful exchanges with a number of international artists who visited the Danish Academy. In 1970 he received the lifelong grant from the Danish State. Widely represented at the National Gallery of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, Holstebro Museum of Art, Nordjyllands Museum of Art and Vestjyllands Museum of Art. Albert Mertz has left behind extensive written material that has been published, a few films and an extraordinary body of work. In addition, there is an unpublished body of notes, commenced in France. These meticulously dated notebooks and diaries, numbering approximately 200, contain texts, sketches and collages, which he considered as his artistic testament.

LONE MERTZ

Selected Exhibitions in Denmark

- 1998 Albert Mertz and Lawrence Weiner: Installations. **Stalke, Copenhagen**
- 1988 Dialog: Installations in collaboration with Lawrence Weiner.
- 1987 Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg. Giv Agt Mertz! Den Kgl. Kobberstiksamling. **The National Gallery of Fine Arts, Copenhagen** (Catalogue)
- 1983 Kunst i Byen. The centre of Copenhagen.
- 1983 Red As Well As Green As Well As Yellow As Well As Blue. Installations in collaboration with Lawrence Weiner. **Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg** (Catalogue)
- 1976 Didspringet. International Exhibition. **Charlottenborg, Copenhagen** (Catalogue)
- 1966 Pejlinger. **Louisiana, Humlebæk** (Catalogue)
- 1962 Fluxus Festival, **Nikolaj Kirke and Allé Scenen, Copenhagen**.
- 1961 Bevægelse i Kunsten, **Louisiana, Humlebæk** (Catalogue)
- 1960 Gå ind i maleriet. Group exhibition, **Galerie Köpcke, Copenhagen**.

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”I want pictures that manifest themselves almost brutally in any room, pictures that are perceived immediately, pictures that are sensed, pictures that are without content, i.e. without literature.”
(AM 24.1.74)

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